

OAC aftercare

Looking after your mouth and sinus after treatment

Advice after an opening between the mouth and sinus is suspected, found or treated. Read this alongside your extraction instructions and any individual advice from your clinician.

What is an oro antral communication

The roots of the upper back teeth can lie close to the air-filled sinus inside the cheekbone. Removing a tooth can sometimes leave an opening between the mouth and sinus, called an oro-antral communication (OAC). You may also be given these precautions when no opening is visible, because the area is very close to the sinus.

A small opening may heal with protection of the blood clot. Some openings need stitches or gum tissue to cover and protect the area while it heals. Protecting the area from pressure helps it heal and reduces the risk of a persistent opening or sinus infection.

Protect the sinus for **at least 2 weeks**

Continue longer if your clinician advises. Do not test the opening by blowing your nose or forcing air through it.

- **Nose blowing: Do not blow your nose.** Gently wipe it instead.
- **Sneezing: Keep your mouth open.** Do not pinch your nostrils or hold in a sneeze.
- **Smoking and vaping:** Avoid both while the area heals, for **at least 2 weeks**.
- **Suction and pressure:** Avoid straws, sucking from sports bottles, blowing up balloons or air mattresses, and wind or brass instruments.
- **Swimming and travel:** Avoid swimming, snorkelling, scuba diving and flying for **at least 2 weeks** and until your clinician says it is safe. Some repairs need longer restrictions; ask before booking travel.

First 24 hours

- **Rest:** Avoid exercise and heavy lifting. Do not rinse, spit forcefully, touch or disturb the wound.
- **Food and drink:** Choose soft, cool or lukewarm foods and chew on the other side. While numb, avoid hot food and drinks and take care not to bite your cheek or lip. Avoid alcohol.

After 24 hours

Gently bathe the area with warm salt water (one teaspoon of salt in a cup of warm water) after meals. Do not swish or spit forcefully. Use a prescribed mouthwash only as directed. Brush your other teeth carefully, avoiding the wound. Keep to soft foods and avoid sharp, hard or crunchy foods that could catch the stitches.

Healing and getting help

Pain swelling and bleeding

Some soreness, swelling and bruising are expected. Swelling often peaks after 2 to 3 days, then gradually improves. For pain relief, you can take paracetamol and ibuprofen together if needed, **provided both are safe for you**. Follow the packet instructions and take ibuprofen with food. Check with your dentist or pharmacist if unsure. **Do not exceed the stated doses** or take other products containing the same medicines. Do not combine ibuprofen with other anti-inflammatory painkillers such as naproxen. **Do not take aspirin for pain relief. Continue prescribed aspirin or blood thinners unless your prescriber advises otherwise.**

A little blood-stained saliva is normal. If the wound bleeds, apply a lightly dampened gauze pack or clean folded cotton cloth and bite firmly for 20 to 30 minutes without repeatedly checking. Contact us if bleeding continues. Heavy bleeding that will not stop needs emergency help.

Medicines

Antibiotics or a nasal decongestant may be prescribed if needed. Take them exactly as directed; they are not necessary for everyone. Check with your clinician or pharmacist before starting a nasal spray, particularly if you take other medicines or have a medical condition. Do not use a decongestant nasal spray or drops for longer than advised, and **never for more than 7 days**. Contact us if symptoms persist.

Stitches

Leave stitches alone and avoid pulling your cheek to look at the wound. Many stitches dissolve over around 2 weeks, but some take longer or need removal.

Please contact us promptly if you notice

- Liquid passing from your mouth into your nose when drinking, or air or bubbles passing through the wound.
- The wound opening, or new or worsening pain, swelling or pressure in your cheek or sinus.
- Persistent foul taste or discharge, fever, feeling unwell, or bleeding that does not settle with pressure.

These symptoms need assessment. Do not try to check the opening yourself or wait until a routine review if you are concerned.

Who to call

The Treatment Centre: **01872 241955**

Monday-Thursday 8:30am-4:30pm; Friday 8:30am-4pm.

Weekends - private care: call **01872 241955** and listen for the private on-call dentist details. The dentist may be at another practice in Cornwall; fees may apply.

Urgent NHS care: if you cannot reach your dentist, call Smile Together on **0333 405 0290** (Monday-Friday, 8:30am-5pm). Outside these hours, including weekends and bank holidays, call **NHS 111**.

Call 999 or go to A&E for heavy bleeding that will not stop, or severe swelling affecting breathing, swallowing or your eyes. Do not wait for a dental appointment. Local A&E: Royal Cornwall Hospital (Treliske), Truro.